



Pharyngitis

Sore Throat

Surprising Facts:

Only about 15% of the people who go to a doctor with a bad sore throat have strep throat. You need a test to tell for sure. You only need antibiotics if your test shows you have strep throat.

What to do:

- Drink more water. Honey and lemon in hot water or herbal teas are good, too. Do not give honey to children under 1.
- Gargle with warm salt water.
- Suck on a hard candy, vitamin C drop or throat lozenge. Do not give to young children.
- Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen to relieve pain. Read the label for a child's dose.

Call your doctor if:

- You have a hard time swallowing or breathing.
- You get a sore throat after being exposed to strep throat.
- You also have a fever over 101° or rash with a sore throat.
- You cannot trace the cause to a cold, allergy, smoking, yelling or other irritation.



DOH 130-044 March 2009

For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TDD/TTY 1-800-833-6388).

Developed in collaboration with:
Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department / Illustration © 2001

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
American Academy of Family Physicians, and Healthwise

Viruses cause most sore throats. When viruses infect your nose, throat and sinuses, your body fights back by making mucus. This helps wash out viruses. The mucus from your nose and sinuses drains into your throat. It can make your throat feel sore. Allergies, smoking, and air pollution can also lead to a sore throat. Some sore throats happen when stomach acid comes up into the throat. Yelling or speaking for a long time can also make the throat sore.

Antibiotics don't work against viral infections. A sore throat from a virus will get better on its own within a week or two. Antibiotics won't make a sore throat go away any faster if it is caused by a virus. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed may harm you by creating stronger germs.

Talk with your health care provider about medicines that can help you feel better. For sore throats caused by allergies, your provider can help you figure out how to avoid the things that trigger your allergies.

Some sore throats, such as strep throat, are caused by bacteria. Your health care provider can do a test to see if you have strep throat. Signs of strep throat include throat pain, fever, swollen glands and white patches or pus in the throat. It is contagious and more common in children ages 3–15. Strep throat is a serious infection that usually needs to be treated with antibiotics. If your test shows you have strep, your provider may give you antibiotics. Always finish the entire prescription—the last few pills kill the toughest germs.

The best way to prevent infections is to wash your hands. Germs are spread when you touch your hands to your mouth, nose and eyes. Washing your hands often with soap and warm water will help keep germs from entering your body. To prevent sore throats don't smoke, and avoid things that cause allergies, such as dust, pollen and fumes. Drink lots of water, and get plenty of rest.



Dear Colleague,

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) provides print-ready files (PDFs) of health education materials. To ensure that the original quality of the piece is maintained, please read and follow the instructions below and the specifications included for professional printing.

- **Use the latest version.** DOH materials are developed using the most current information available, are checked for clinical accuracy, and are field tested with the intended audience to ensure they are clear and readable. DOH programs make periodic revisions to educational materials, so please check this web site to be sure you have the latest version. DOH assumes no responsibility for the use of this material or for any errors or omissions.
- **Do not alter.** We are providing this artwork with the understanding that it will be printed without alterations and copies will be free to the public. Do not edit the text or use illustrations or photographs for other purposes without first contacting us. Please do not alter or remove the DOH logo, publication number or revision date. If you want to use a part of this publication for other purposes, contact the Office of Health Promotion first.
- **For quality reproduction:** Low resolution PDF files are intended for black and white or color desktop printers. They work best if you are making only one or two copies. High resolution PDF files are intended for reproducing large quantities and are set up for use by professional offset print shops. The high resolution files also include detailed printing specifications. Please match them as closely as possible and insist on the best possible quality for all reproductions.

If you have questions, contact:
Office of Health Promotion
P.O. Box 47833 Olympia, WA 98504-7833
(360) 236-3736

Sincerely,
Health Education Resource Exchange Web Team

P R I N T I N G S P E C I F I C A T I O N S

Title: **Sore Throat** (fact sheet)

Size: 8.5 x 11

Paper stock: 80# text white

Ink color: Black

DOH Pub #: 130-044